Interview with Calvin Peters on February 28, 1993, in Tacoma, Washington, by Carrie Bratlie.

Calvin when were you born? March 19, 1927.

Calvin where were you born? Mud Bay, outside Olympia, Washington.

Was this a Home or a Hospital? House.

Is that the current property that you mother is living on? defiantly.

What was the house like? A wooden frame home.

As a boy where did you grow up? I went to Cushman Hospital School. It was a TB sanatorium type thing. My folks took me out and had me checked by our own family doctor, he determined that I was healthy. I had scar tissue from pneumonia but not TB. Then I moved home and spent time with my grandmother Molly. [Father's mother]

Did you ever live on reservation housing? Not that I remember.

Other than Cushman school where did you go to school? Griffin School, I graduated from there. I went to Olympia High school and graduated from there.

What is Griffin school? A public school.

White public school? Yes, I guess we were the only Indians there.

How did you feel being the only Indians? Well we had to fight our way through school.

Do you feel you received a fair education? Yes, just as good as anyone else.

Did you feel singled out by the educators and administration? No

What about the other kids in school? Oh yes, we were always called dirty Indians.

When you were in school in Olympia did anyone else from the tribe attend? No, they went to Shelton.

How come you went to Olympia High school? We lived in Thurston County, and the rest [of the tribe] lived in Mason County.

Do you think that it is fair that you can't live on Squaxin Island? Well, Its nobody's fault that we cant live there. The landscape on Squaxin is not friendly to a community any longer. It is not good ground for septic tank systems. It has no fresh water and no electricity. So unless you want to live without all of that.

That's exactly what I mean. The treaty Indians were given a piece of ground that is inconvenient to live on. All of the elders of the tribe echo yourself. It is only my generation that is somewhat agitated about the land not being liveable. Well they used to live on it until about 1900 -1920's. Both of my parents were born there. But if you wanted to find work you had to leave the Island. That's why we didn't live on the Island. At that time there was fresh water because my folks had artesian wells. everyone else was using coal lamps [including the whites on the mainland] so that didn't matter. And the population was so small that we didn't pollute the tide water with sewage from outhouses. I think the thing we missed as kids not living on a reservation and mixed with the white race is the traditional way of life with our type of Indians. Learning our type of culture in an Indian village. Practicing our type of religion, and learning our language. You can't speak Indian if you're living with the whites. My grandmother Molly [father's mother] tried to teach me the Indian Language, but I was too smart. I said, "I don't need it grandma I live with all these white people and nobody speaks our language". I'm now sorry I did not learn when it was offered. My grandmother told me I would be sorry for not learning from her and I am.

Has anyone tried to bring the language back? Yes, I don't know what language they are bringing back, but at the tribal center they are teaching an Indian language.

Cal brings out an article written by Barbara Lane, 1972. An anthropologist that studied the tribe and wrote a report later to be introduced as evidence in the court case leading to the Bolt Decision. [The complete article is in the appendix of this] project.

Do you fish and collect shellfish? Yes.

Is that how you have supported your family? No, after graduation from high school I went to work for the state. I did not pass my civil service test so I had to be let go. I went back to what I knew, which was oysters. I worked in the oysters for about five years. I started in oysters when I was eleven or twelve. I started having trouble with my legs. I went to the doctor and he said I was going to have to change professions. I asked why. He said that I was getting rheumatoid arthritis. I asked what would happen if did not quite oystering, since it was the only thing I knew. He answered me with a question. Do you want to walk when your thirty five years old? So I became a painter, automotive painter. In 1960 I bought a Tavern. I sold that and went back into automotive for a while. Business got bad and I went to work for Boeing for a while. In 1968 in the big Boeing cut back I was laid off. I went back to work for myself again [automotive paint and body]. Then the tribe voted me into office, when I wasn't even looking for work. I had about a dozen cars to work on and I had to farm them out for others to finish. The tribe had voted me in as their Land Plan Manager in 1970 and I worked with them until 1985.

When I met you in 1981 you were with the tribe and fishing.

Right, now I fish it helps supplement the income.

Can you tell me of your childhood? There was five of us, my younger brother Emery, my brother Raymond, my sister Jeanett, my brother Bill, and myself. Raymond was killed in the Second World War. Jeanett died when she was seven of pneumonia and diabetes. My brother Emery was killed in a car accident in 1982. There is only my brother Bill and I left. We always got along good together. We always fought together, we worked and partied together.

What is the age difference from the oldest to the youngest? Emery was born in 1928 and Bill was born in 1923. It was pretty much a step ladder.

Your mother raised four boys down on the water them? Well, actually three, my grandma Molly had Raymond and she kept him through his teen years. He then joined the services when he was sixteen.[Grandma Molly is Calvin's great-grandmother on his father's side].

Where did Grandma Molly live in proximity to your Home?

Right next door.

What was your happiest time growing up? Out fishing, playing on the water, swimming.

I would suspect growing up on Mud Bay would have been a lot of fun. I have enjoyed everytime I have been there. Yes, we go back every year and have our family parties, and barbecues.

In 1964 did you participate in the "Fish In's"? No, I didn't get active in Indian affairs until 1970, when I started working for the tribe. I was on the council that was involved in the set up for the Medicine Creek trials.

Can you talk to me about the Bolt decision? I was involved in the Bolt decision. We were one of the first tribes to sign up and go through the trial. It was us, [Squaxin] Puyallup, and Nisqually tribes that started the trial. Many of the other tribes did not want to get involved, but eventually they figured that they better. Because win or loose it was going to effect them. I forget just how many tribes we ended up with going into that.

I remember when the Bolt decision came down the anger of the whites. I was in the sixth grade and I remember not understanding why if the Indians were here first why the decision was necessary. I was living in Steilacoom, [Washington] it was and is a very conservative area and many whites were enraged.

The reasons for the Bolt decision are that the non Indians felt that the fish were their product, their resource. They didn't feel that the Indians had a right to it. They didn't feel that they had to live up to a treaty that was signed by their forefathers, or their forefathers, forefathers.

So what got to them was Medicine Creek, and the clause that the Indians could fish and take shellfish in all usual and custom areas? Yes, because they were catching 98% or better in fish. Along come a bunch of Indians that maybe number 1/10th of what they were, wanting fifty percent of their livelihood [50%]. You can't blame them for getting mad, but they can't blame us for wanting something that was promised to us. They kept saying that the treaty wasn't worth the paper is was written on. If you look at it that way then the Constitution of the United States wasn't worth the paper it was written on either. Indian treaties were listed in the Constitution as the law of the land. They, non Indians say that the courts awarded us 50% of the fish, but the Indians look at from the other side, because the courts took away 50% of our fish. We used to fish all the product. Then the argument was that we were a conquered people. We were not a

conquered people, we signed a treaty. The treaties were to end the squabbles over land. The courts up until the bolt decision were not very lenient to the tribes or the treaties.

The Bolt decision set up a lot of other Indian Nations, to win cases not just here in the Northwest, it has been used extensively. The Bolt decision went through the Appeals Court, and the Supreme Court, and was held up. The Indians have always maintained that they have taken a screwing from the treaties that they signed. Because you have one side drafting and understanding the treaties and one side that did not understand the treaties, or what they were giving up. This country was built on Indian resources, the Gold, the Silver, the Coal, and the Copper.

This was an indigenous people that knew what was in the land. If you lived in the forest of Maine that does not necessarily mean that you knew there was Gold down in Texas. However, the Indians in Texas knew what was there and what to do with it. The Indians do not celebrate Presidents Day or Columbus Day. Columbus did not discover our country, and George Washington was not the father of our country.

I think that people forget that there was already a civilization here when Columbus, Balboa and others sailed here. Yes, the explorers brought disease with them. I remember a story of the whites throwing blankets into the water of Juan de' Fuca Straight and floating ashore on them. The blankets had come from a diphtheria hospital and wiped out many Indians.

Ina Peters [Calvin's wife] starts to talk of what it was like from stories of Cal growing up of the prejudice.

Is the prejudice caused by the Bolt decision? No, in the 1950's president Eisenhower was terminating tribes. This was the era of termination. It was not kosher to be identified as an Indian. I never felt this way and in school any time someone made a snide remark I

would stand up say, "I am an Indian". They [whites] would say, "that place looks like a pig pen, Indians must live there". If they saw a drunk walking down the road it was assumed that it was an Indian, because the person was drunk. They would say this without any regard to anyone's feelings. I once spoke up in a literature class in high school and said, " this makes me very mad I'm an Indian. If you want to look at my house, come over there where we live and you tell me how dirty that place is. Then go right next door where some whites live and see what kind of a trashy dump that place is. Then tell me Indians live there." Then I said, " if you look at the percentage of filthy Indians in comparison to the clean ones, and the percentage of filthy whites to the ones that are clean. Your percentage is not going to be very damn far apart".

The tribe of today is having problems beyond that of Bolt, it is with alcohol. Has the alcohol always been a problem? Yes, I would say that its always been a problem, but its not always been a problem to all the tribal people. Its been a problem to those few that use it excessively. A large number of our tribe was religious so they did not smoke, or swear, or drink.